

Chapter 4

Songs of the In-Between: Remembering in the Land that Memory Forgot

Angela Impey

“Haibo! These *izitweletwele!*”¹ exclaims MaKhumalo, exchanging a large one for one of a more familiar size, “Ha! This one is better! We used to come together like this and play when we were young!” We are sitting in the yard of the Ngwenya homestead. I have just started a research project on mouth-bow practices in western Maputaland and have brought with me a box of Austrian jews harps in a range of different sizes. It has been three decades or more since these instruments were sold in the local trading stores, and as long since the women have played them.

“Hey! This instrument reminds me of my sister!” responds MaFambile, one of the older women in the group. “We used to walk across the flood plains at Banzi Pan to visit our relatives in Mozambique. All the way we would play *isitweletwele!*” “It reminds me of those days when I was young before I accepted Ngwenya [husband].” MaMkhize offers, “Hey! Wearing *amafaskama* [colored hair combs]! Once there was a man from the Mlambo family. He called to me, ‘Hey Mnakeni, where is that *wiggie* that you came with when you came to this place?’ Ha! It was destroyed by the pot. It was still those days when we used to fetch water from the Usuthu River with *ukhamba!*”²

While the women reminisce enthusiastically about music-making during their youth, MaGumede quietly focuses her attention on the instruments. She tests each one, listening attentively to its upper harmonics and its deeper resonances; she experiments with short, stop-start phrases. Finally she settles on one instrument and its liquid tone appears to draw her into a particular song. As her melody takes shape, the other women quieten down, lured, so it seems, by the intensity of the sounds and the memories it invokes:

Naliveni bakithi naliveni! (There is the van, my people!)
Naliveni bafana naliveni! (There is the van, boys!)
Balekani bafana naliveni! (Run boys, there is the van!)
Lizonibopha! (They will arrest you! They will tie you up!)
(Personal Interview with Eziphosheni women, August 31, 2003)

¹ *Isitweletwele*: jews harps (sing.).

² *Ukhamba*: clay pot used by women to transport water on the head.

Nowhere, it could be argued, has the force of music to communicate and persuade been played out more vigorously than in apartheid South Africa. During its final and most rigorous years, when most forms of oppositional oratory appeared to have been all but silenced by a brutal and assiduous government intelligence apparatus, the public found expression in the bare bones of a rhythm, seemingly stripped and innocuous, yet intoxicating in its appeal. This rhythm, known as *toyi-toyi*,³ dug deep into the energy of resistance politics, raising fists of defiance and mobilizing millions into collective action. Characterized by regular beats produced by a stationary but vigorous dance, and punctuated by a simple pattern of off-beats articulated by political watchwords, *toyi-toyi* throbbed at the heart of public dissent and delivered an insistent chorus for human rights and equal justice.

Yet while *toyi-toyi* may have carried the force of resistance in the cities and townships across South Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s, there were many who were too remote from the urban centers to feel part of the action. They, like most black South Africans, had been forcibly removed from their ancestral lands; they had suffered the consequences of familial fragmentation brought about by labor migrancy and grinding poverty, and had been undermined at every level by a government that vehemently refused to consent to their civil liberties, or indeed their humanity. One of the consequences of extreme marginalization, particularly for those who inhabited the interstitial spaces on state boundaries, was that their protestations fell off the edges of the collective movement, their exclusion compounded by their characteristically fluid cultural identities, by livelihood practices that depended on high levels of mobility, and by their apparent indeterminate citizenship. This proscription was the consequence also of a generalized assumption that borderland people were exempt from the racial oppression and political authoritarianism experienced at the center; their physical locality enabled them to retreat to the relative protection of neighboring independent states when conditions in South Africa became untenable.

Protesting at the Margins

In southern Africa, borderlands are distinguished by major rivers, deserts, and mountain ranges, which offer themselves up as natural partitions for the marking of territories and the distant making of maps. While stark and unyielding in their geographic form, they are in reality spaces where ethnicities bleed liberally

³ *Toyi-toyi* is believed to be a siNdebele word meaning “to move forward while remaining in one place.” While its exact derivation is debatable, it is generally believed to have been used by guerilla fighters in the Zimbabwean War of Liberation to accompany training exercises. It was subsequently adopted by South Africans exiled in Zimbabwe who introduced it to political rallies in South Africa at the end of the 1970s. By the 1990s, *toyi-toyi* had become synonymous with mass political protest throughout South Africa. See Maluleke (1993); Olwage (2008b).

into one another, and where the contemporary flow of languages and cultural practices reflect centuries of economic and political fissure and fusion (Harries, 1994; Kloppers, 2006). Within the context of contemporary national constitution, borderland people are simultaneously part of and excluded from multiple centers. The cultural theorist Homi Bhabha has pointed out that it is precisely in this state of “in-betweenness” that borderlands “provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (1994, p. 4). However, while cultural values in the borderlands may be negotiated through the interplay between or among groups, at the center they are generally considered to lack identity.

The history of apartheid has been appreciably influenced by the mass media and by a burgeoning heritage sector, which have distilled the past into a master narrative that many argue has been constructed to validate the new political order (Baines, 1998; Guy, 1998; Nuttall and Coetzee, 1998). Protest songs, such as *toyi-toyi*, have been likewise packaged as a coherent repertoire, sutured into national memory as “show pieces or slogans” (Masekela, 1993, cited in Gilbert, 2008, p. 177) during the height of the anti-apartheid movement by official cultural ambassadors for the ANC in exile (such as the Amandla Cultural Ensemble) and popularized within the country at mass rallies, funerals, and celebrations (Ansell, 2004; Gilbert, 2008, p. 157). In contrast, this chapter aims to explore the notion of protest at the margins as resounded in songs made popular at the local level. I argue that these songs provide an equally dense ethnographic register of human rights violations in apartheid South Africa as did those that were rallied to by thousands on the city streets. Yet while no less compelling in their appeal for economic, social, and political rights, their remoteness from organized opposition politics has rendered them barely audible in the post-apartheid “struggle memory.” This chapter therefore seeks a place in a growing body of particularist histories in South Africa that privilege the multiplicity, diversity, and quotidian nature of histories and identities in the practice of social and political reconstitution.⁴ Further, the focus on “popular music” departs from its more commonplace designation in the academy as that which is founded on the mechanics of production and technological mediation, and by its constitution in mass culture and industrial capital (Frith, 2004). Rather, the songs with which I am concerned are conceptualized as popular because they carry meaning through shared expression in everyday contexts, providing a discursive reflection on the lived experiences of political repression and economic rupture, and offering consolation, however fleeting, through the collective performance of noncooperation. Drawing on Vansina (2006), Vaughan (1987), Perks and Thomson (2006), and Finnegan (2003, 2007), who similarly recognize the value of songs as situated sites of oral history, the focus here is

⁴ A number of influential studies have been conducted on popular music and resistance during apartheid; however, their focus has been almost exclusively urban. See, for example, Ballantine (1993), Allen (2003), Erlmann (1991), and Olwage (2008a).

on a body of expressive activities that elaborate social and political meanings as both audible and corporeal, and that have remained embedded in cultural practices across time and space. These songs are rooted in orality, improvisation and collective invention, and while not linked to organized political action, their role as instruments of mobilization at the individual and community level warrants their recognition within a broader constellation of “struggle” discourses in South Africa.

Mapping the Place In-between

In the far northeast of South Africa, where the province of KwaZulu Natal borders Mozambique and the small mountain kingdom of Swaziland, the landscape is marked by a vast network of coastal sand forests and shallow flood plains. The area is rich in endemic fauna and flora species, and is highly valued as a transitional zone between southern and east African ecosystems (Bruton and Cooper, 1980).

From afar, the landscape is distinguished by forests of lime green acacia trees that proliferate in the savannah marshlands. The people who live here call the tree *umkhanyakude*: that which shines brightly from a distance. It is believed that by bathing in water boiled with its bark one will assume its luminous quality, a particularly useful attribute when competing for a job or attempting to attract the attention of a potential lover. On the other hand, to the European hunters and traders who crossed into the area from Mozambique in the mid-1800s, the tree became known as the *fever tree*, a visual icon of malaria and sleeping sickness; diseases to which many succumbed, and which ultimately prevented widespread white settlement in the area. This tree, with its oppositional good luck/bad luck allusions, symbolizes a landscape that has been and continues to be highly contested. For the people of western Maputaland, who are of mixed Zulu, Swazi, and Thembe-Thonga ethnicity, it signifies a cautiously adapted livelihood based on shifting agriculture and cattle, a life at once rooted to land, yet dependent also upon the establishment of extended kinship networks across the region which were used to support a system of in and out migration during times of environmental stress, disease, or warfare.⁵

For the white South African government of the early 1900s, however, the tree signaled an environment that required re-landscaping.⁶ Ironically, they sought to control the environment by keeping it wild. Instead of removing the mosquitoes,

⁵ Harries suggests that people of western Maputaland have historically identified themselves as “being from the land” of the clan dominating a particular chiefdom, rather than by ethnicity or affiliation to the nation state (1994, p. 6).

⁶ The southern border of Mozambique was drawn up under an antislavery treaty in 1817, recognizing Portugal’s suzerainty from Cape Delagoa to Delagoa Bay. Border disputes flared up intermittently and the issue was finally submitted for adjudication to President MacMahon of France in 1872. An Anglo-Portuguese treaty defined the border in

they removed the people, creating a buffer that functioned as both a militarized zone to control border crossings and a compensatory wilderness constructed for the rapidly urbanizing white population. Formally demarcated a protected area in 1924, Ndumo Game Reserve, as it was later designated, was gradually cleared of all inhabitants, and by the 1970s it had been duly refashioned as a pristine, timeless space in nature; a space outside history.⁷ The “timelessness” installed in the image of the game reserve has, however, become memorialized as a critical moment of loss for the local people, who were made to settle on the perimeter of the reserve, and for whom conservation has remained associated with a profound sense of dispossession.

Today, western Maputaland is interlaced with fences that encapsulate the floodplains and mountains with borders and boundaries: state fences, game fences, veterinarian fences, fences of commercial properties. Some function as symbolic spatial demarcations only; others comprise electrified cabling and stand 14-strands high. These fences cut across histories of everyday movements, trade routes and the age-old seasonal migrations that were established to maximize adaptation to environmental stresses on food production and disease (Harries, 1994). Significantly, the spatial rupture caused by fences affected a new pattern of mobilities and immobilities that cut across gender, forcing men into the migrant labor system in the gold mines in Johannesburg or on sugar farms in southern KwaZulu Natal, and confining women to ever-decreasing fixed tracts of land upon which the survival of their families became increasingly dependent.

Women’s Songs as Markers of Memory

The notion of borders or boundaries brings together two related concepts in this chapter. The first pertains to the geopolitical demarcation of the modern nation state, which determines citizenship and political rights.⁸ The second is embedded in cultural practice and relates more specifically to the notion of “genre” as bounded by mutually understood form, performance context, and meaning. The denotations of boundary in both context and practice are given meaning in this study through their transgressive relationship to states of fixity and closure. Both geopolitical and musical borders are divergent, overlapping, and exist in a state of “in-between.” While the political ambivalence of borderlands has already been discussed in relation to its political constitution and to constructions of identity, the following section will focus on two genres of women’s songs, and examine the ways in which these song and dance forms, normally associated with frivolity

1891; four years later “British Amatongaland” was proclaimed a Protectorate and in 1897 it was incorporated into Zululand (Harries, 1994).

⁷ For further discussion on nature and temporality in the making of game reserves in KwaZulu Natal, see Brooks (2000) and Beinhart (2008).

⁸ For a more detailed review of borderlands, see Alvarez (1995).

and youthful pastimes, became the sites for the collective expression of women's protest against the state during the 1950s and 1960s, a period which marked a particularly oppressive moment in apartheid history.

This section draws on research conducted with two groups of elderly women in western Maputaland whose families had been removed from the Ndumo Game Reserve in the 1940s and 1950s. I argue that women's songs provide a more consistent, visceral historical narrative of the politics of locality than do men's musical practices, as men were often absent from the area for years at a time. Memories of these songs provide insight into the history of women's experiences, and reveal the essence of their agency which was mobilized through narratives of social critique (Scott, 1990; Friedman, 1998). As suggested by McEwan (2003, p. 739), women's experiences have been significantly marginalized from dominant accounts in South African history, and have been largely denied agency in the construction of collective memory. This research focuses on women's narrative poetics of geopolitical identities in particular, stimulated by the recollection of two genres of walking songs that were last performed some 30-40 years ago. The demise of these songs is attributed to both cultural change (and in particular, the introduction of radios and cassette players brought back from the cities by husbands and boyfriends) and the loss of the spatial context that had provided their social and poetic mooring.⁹

The first set of songs is associated with walking great distances across state lines to buy cloth and sugar from the trading stores in Swaziland or to visit family in Mozambique. Referred to as "*amaçulo naniwasebenzisa manihamba*" (songs that are used when we walk), they were performed to the accompaniment of two mouth-bows (*umqangala* and *isizenze*) and the jews harp (*isitweletwele*). Lyrics were implied in the melodies played on the mouth instruments whose pitch contours are shaped by tonal inflections of the three languages spoken in the region. Sometimes the songs were performed in a call-response format; the instrumental melody providing the "solo" to which a group of friends walking with the player would respond with a sung chorus. These songs were comprised of short, cyclical melodies, their simple, repetitive, driving phrases providing rhythmic impetus to sustain long-distance walking.

The second set includes songs that were sung at carefully designated localities conceptualized as "far away." These songs/dances, known as *ingadla*, were associated with youthful *isigcawu* gatherings that would take place on moonlit nights or on special occasions such as the annual return of young men from work in the mines of Johannesburg. People would walk great distances to attend these events, which took place within proximity of a trading store or a similar such communal place-marker. *Ingadla* songs were performed in a circle, and young women would take turns to dance into the center, either individually or in pairs, showing off their talent and dramatizing humorous events, while their friends sang, ululated, and cajoled from the outer circle, and the men observed from a distance.

⁹ For more details on these genres, see Impey (2006, 2008).

Ingadla songs were more rhythmically, melodically, and lyrically complex than mouth-bow songs, but were linked to the former, whose principal performance context was the bush paths that wove across the landscape and connected fields and homesteads to *isicgawini*.¹⁰

When we went there, we would take *isitweletwele* and these bows. It just depended on what you liked. We would take the instruments and put them in our mouths and walk through the bush. We would go straight to Ndumo or to *isicgawini*. It helped to cover the long distances when we played these instruments along the way. When we got there, we would dance *ingadla*. When we were tired, we would make a fire and the boys would cook birds and we would eat honey. Then we would take up our instruments and play until we were ready to dance again. (Personal interview, Makete Nkomonde, Usuthu, April 24, 2004)

The songs collected during the research period encompass a performance history of some 100 years. Their thematic content varies from simple greetings and proposals of love (often associated with the songs that were inherited from mothers and older sisters, otherwise expressed as “those that were before”), to “corrective” or “regulatory” songs that were sung as a mechanism of reestablishing the social order. Songs in the latter category provide evidence of an embedded symbolic regulatory system that, while by no means unique to these communities, is in this context a relevant indicator of a culturally sanctioned system of social critique, a poetic strategy that linked music to different forms of social action. The following song, for instance, is typical of those that were performed to publicly shame indolent women. It is a shrewdly constructed piece in which the solo-chorus format is effectively inverted: the soloist is assigned the lyrics in which various invitations are made to join the work party, and which in reality would be proffered by a group. In turn, the excuses made by the culpable individual are delivered by a chorus. This inversion is used as a poetic strategy to detract from direct criticism and relies rather on coercion by consensus, its potency effectively carried by culturally understood structures and inferences:

Solo: Asambe siye'masimini (Let's go to the fields)
 Chorus: Ngiyazigulela mina (I am sick)
 Solo: Asambe siy'ezinkunini (Let's go and fetch firewood)
 Chorus: Ngiyazigulela mina (I am sick)
 Solo: Asambe siy'otshwaleni (Let's go and drink alcohol)
 Chorus: Ngizakutobela khona (I will try to follow you)
 (Personal interview with women in Usuthu Gorge, August 27, 2003)

The performance of such corrective songs was explained thus:

¹⁰ *Isicgawini* refers to the places designated for *isicgawu* gatherings.

Siphiwe: When we were young and a person was doing something wrong, we would challenge them with a song. If you wanted to show them something, they would be the ones to feel ashamed for what they did. Then you would be happy and they would be sad. That way your heart would be opened.

Fambile: If that person comes and finds you singing about the thing that she is doing, she might think that this is about her. If a girl has many men—she has one here and there and there—that is a song! She might stop doing this when she hears it. It was like that! So in those days, these songs were our newspapers. It was our thing because there was no education at that time. (Personal interview with Siphiwe Cele and Fambile Khumalo, Eziphosheni, August 31, 2003)

On the surface, both mouth-bow and *ingadla* songs appear to support everyday, youthful concerns and activities. However, closer examination of the lyrics across the combined repertoire reveals an astonishingly high number that describe quite the opposite. Far from portraying a pastoral existence that was exempt from institutionalized racial oppression, these songs describe a life under intense surveillance, under which people were forced to conceal their possessions, disguise their livelihood activities, and live as fugitives from their homes. The common thread that weaves through these musical scenarios is one of the police, the visible instruments of the state. Some songs provide warnings to other women of their impending arrival, some report specific incidences involving them, and others still express outward defiance toward them. The essence of flight expressed in these songs speaks strongly to the fragmentation of the community and the family that resulted from increasing state control of the borderlands in the late 1950s. In reality, therefore, while always appearing to be on the run in their songs, the escape routes available to women were becoming increasingly obstructed by fences and by a mounting body of apartheid laws.¹¹ While on one hand these songs clearly reveal the underlying disposition of guilt or civil disobedience that shaped the social and political consciousness of all black South Africans under apartheid—the dominance of which in such a remote borderland locality provides testimony to the omnipotence of the apartheid hegemony—on the other they were strategically deceptive. By inhabiting the same melodies and performance spaces as those genres that focused on relatively innocuous girlish pursuits, the protest element in the songs was effectively camouflaged from the police. It may also have been that these fugitive songs were so commonplace and embedded in everyday experience that they didn't warrant a separate musical space, as herein lay their agency.

One of the most poignant in the combined repertoire of songs is the song that makes direct reference to the removal of the communities from what is now Ndumo Game Reserve. This song lies at the core of the dispossession trope in the

¹¹ A series of draconian laws were passed during the two decades following the installation of the Nationalist government in 1948, enshrining apartheid in legislation and marking this as the period of “high apartheid.”

repertoire as it represents the actual moment of forced displacement from the park, and remains powerfully associated with a more generalized experience of loss. It is a necessarily over-simplified song, the lyrics so unspecific that we were only able to understand their context and significance through the explanatory narratives that were later provided. Yet its use of repetition and short, cyclical phrases vividly portrays the panic and intensity of that final encounter, as well as the powerlessness of the people to protect themselves against the violence of the state:

Balekani nonke! (Run away everyone!)
 Kukhona okuzayo! (Something is coming!)
 Gijimani nonke! (Run away everyone!)
 Kukhona okuzayo! (Something is coming!)

MaFambile explains:

We were running away from the white man from *KwaNyamazane* called *Umthanathana*.¹² We were not removed at once. My father had two homesteads. They started by moving the cattle to this side. Then we moved to another homestead. Others were left on that side. They were later arrested and forced out. They were arrested if they were found with an antelope. If they were found fishing in the river, they would arrest you. You couldn't eat your fish freely. They chased everyone then; they said they didn't need them there. They chased us from our land. We're now suffering from hunger. We don't eat anything and we don't have any water. Our cabbages are getting dry. We were drinking from the big river they called Banzi. Today, that's where they built a hotel for the tourists.¹³

¹² *KwaNyamazane* means "the place of the antelope" and refers to the Parks Authority or Ndumo Game Reserve. *Umthanathana*, translated as "the one who speaks contemptuously and we shut our ears," was the name given to the Parks official responsible for the removal of the communities from the game reserve.

¹³ An online brochure advertising the Ndumo Wilderness Camp aptly reflects the way in which the tourism industry has rendered invisible from the landscape any memory of its human inhabitants: "Proclaimed in the 1920s, Ndumo Game Reserve, (formerly known as Ndumu), is one of South Africa's oldest and most scenic parks. It is situated in northern Natal and just south of the Mozambique border. The Nyamithi and Banzi Pans, which are surrounded by beautiful yellow Fever Trees, are the focal points in the reserve. These pans are on the Pongola and Usutu floodplains and attract wildlife in large numbers. The Ndumo Reserve is not well known, even to many South Africans, as accommodation has previously been limited. Now, Ndumo Wilderness Camp has been built on the edge of Banzi Pan. The view from the camp's deck over the Banzi Pan is one of the most extraordinarily scenic of any camp in Southern Africa" (<http://www.eyesonafrica.net/south-african-safari/ndumo.htm>, accessed November 10, 2008). The Ndumo Wilderness Camp has since been closed and discussions are in process to integrate the formerly displaced communities into its management under public-private partnerships.

Angela: Did anyone try to resist the game reserve authorities?

Fambile: No, they just took their belongings and ran. Even today we miss that place! There we were free to go to Mozambique to visit our relatives. We remember the places where we lived and used to meet to dance. Now we can't do that. If we go back, we are arrested. We have graves there but we have no access to them to talk to our ancestors. Our grandmothers' and grandfathers' graves are on that side. We were never even given the chance to do *umhlankosi*.¹⁴ (Personal interview with Fambile Khumalo, Eziphosheni, September 1, 2003)

Once removed from Banzi Pan in the Ndumo Game Reserve, people were made to settle on land on the periphery of the park, where they pledged allegiance to local leaders, built new houses, and prepared new fields. In some instances a mere 14-strand game fence separated women from their old fields, their proximity serving as a constant reminder of the humiliation of removal over the ensuing years. The displacement of the communities marked the onset of a much more pervasive and insidious policing of the borderlands, however, endorsed by the institutionalization of apartheid legislation in the 1950s that sought to control the actions and movements of all black South Africans at all times. The 1952 Pass Laws Act, for instance, made it compulsory for all black South Africans over the age of 16 years to carry a "pass book" (locally referred to as *dompas*). The document operated as an internal passport, containing vital details of the bearer such as fingerprints, address, and employment status. Despite their remoteness, their songs prove that the women of western Maputaland were as vulnerable to the controls enforced via the *dompas* as were their fellow citizens in the cities:

Naliveni bakithi naliveni! (There is the van, my people!)

Naliveni bafana naliveni! (There is the van, boys!)

Balekani bafana naliveni! (Run boys, there is the van!)

Lizonibopha! (They will arrest you! They will tie you up!)

(Personal interview with women in Eziphosheni, August 31, 2003)

MaFambile explains:

From Ndlaleni's house we walked all the way from Makanyisa, playing *isitweletwele* (jews harp). That's what we were doing when we were going to eat sugar (to buy goods at the trading store). And we were singing "*iveni*" because the police cars were giving us problems. They wanted us to pay for "*dompas*." We remember that song well! That is why we still sing it. (Personal interview with Fambile Khumalo, Eziphosheni, September 1, 2003)

¹⁴ *Umlahlankosi* refers to the ritual delivery of the spirit of the dead from the exact location of death to the homestead of the family. The ritual is mediated through the branch of the *Ziziphus mucronata* (Buffalo Thorn) which is believed to have ancestral power.

The increasing economic and social challenges brought about by forced displacement were often embedded in simple songs of farewell to fathers and husbands who had departed for the cities. Despite the use of the characteristic upbeat “walking/jogging pace” of mouth-bow songs, the lyrics grieve their separation from their loved ones, and vividly express the powerlessness of women to alter their circumstances against the forces of the developing apartheid industrial economy. The following song is likely to have been played while walking alone to the river to fetch water or from the homestead to the fields. Using the same repetitive melodic format and performance context as that of other mouth-bow songs, its solemn sentiment is disguised by the sweetness of the melody: *Sala kahle ntaka baba* (Goodbye, child of my father [husband]). It was played for me by MaNonyi Ndabeni, who claimed it as a song belonging to her mother who had performed it many years previously:

My mother was saying farewell to her man, my father, when he went to *Ezilungwini*.¹⁵ He used to work in Empangeni. I don't know when this was. I know that he left when I was young and when he came back he was sick and died and the children were all grown up. I don't know exactly where my father worked, but it was somewhere in town. He used to send us money. I don't know the years because I am not educated in numbers. (Personal interview with MaNonyi Ndabeni, Usuthu, November 18, 2003)

With the loss of land and resources, so the local economy became increasingly unstable. Male unemployment in the cities and faltering remittance payments forced women to take on supplementary cash-based work in their home areas. Many were forced into illegal activities such as the brewing of alcohol. This increased their vulnerability to police harassment and stimulated the composition of a range of songs about work, shifting their focus from criticisms that had as their objective the regulation of an internal socioeconomic status quo to a collective statement of noncompliance with the external forces of the state. Again, the lyrics implied by the melodies are minimal, delivered as sharp cautionary phrases and embedded within a mutually understood performative context. There are a large number of songs in the repertoire that have at their core phrases such as “Iveni liyalandela!” (The van is coming to fetch us!), that were played to communicate the panic experienced by women when the police invaded their homes: “This song says that I'm running away from the police van. The van is inspecting the homesteads to find out whether the women are making alcohol from sugarcane” (Personal interview with Siphwiwe Mzila, Eziphosheni, August 31, 2003.)

The penalties for illegal beer-brewing were often severe, and the following key phrase of a mouth-bow song refers indirectly to the consequence of arrest: “Emsebenzini kukhala ingolovane” (The bell/siren [of the train] is calling us to

¹⁵ *Ezilungwini* : “the place of the white people.”

work). The song refers to the train that would take the men to the gold mines in Johannesburg. However, as the men would first be transported long distances by bus to the train stations in Siteki in Swaziland or the town of Pongola in the south, it was unlikely that women would have seen or heard them, and the composer explains her song in the following way: “Once I saw a train when I was coming from Pongola where I had been in prison. I was arrested for brewing alcohol and sent to jail for three months. I was quite young then and strong, not like now. Singing it made me think of my husband and helped to soothe my heart” (Personal interview with Makete Nkomonde, Usuthu, November 18, 2003).

Many of the songs recount actual incidents involving the police. While their precise meanings may have been lost in time, the songs have remained in the collective memory, their appeal located in the expression of defiance or reckoning that they communicate. Although my research collaborators were unable to explain the meaning of the following song, it was a well-remembered piece in the *ingadla* repertoire:

Solo: Mabopha' ubopha abanye (The one who arrests others;
You are arresting the others)
Chorus: Uyeheni mayebabo shii! (Statement of shock)
Solo: Uzwise ulayikile (You got a taste of your medicine: I told you so)
Chorus: Uyeheni mayebabo shii! (Statement of shock)
Solo: Isandla sengwenya (The hand of the crocodile)
Chorus: Uzwise ulayikile (You got a taste of your own medicine)
(Personal interview with women in Usuthu, August 28, 2003)

A similar such *ingadla* song refers to the death of a policeman which appears to have occurred when he attempted to procure a bribe from a member of the community. This song demonstrates that some encounters with the police were confrontational:

Uyadela Babo! (You are happy!)
Babulal'iphoyisa (They killed a policeman)
Ngoba imali bayifaka ebhokisini (They put the money in the box)
Babulala iphoyisa (Killed a policeman)
Imali bayefaka ebhokisini (Put the money in a box)
(Personal interview with women in Usuthu, August 27, 2003)

The final song that I wish to look at was not composed as a mouth-bow melody or *ingadla* dance-song. It was sung by women after the first nonracial democratic elections in 1994 as a response to the establishment of a National Land Claims

Commission.¹⁶ Interestingly, the lyrics of this song are far more reliant than the songs previously discussed on deeply encoded natural metaphors—reminiscent of Zulu *izibongo* praises—that were used as a culturally sanctioned medium of political mobilization.¹⁷

Baleka mfana lashona ilanga (Run boy, the sun is setting)

Gijima mfana (Run boy)

Awekho amanzi (There is no water)

Awekho amanzi (There is no water)

Asemfuleni (It is in the river)

(Personal interview with women in Eziphosheni, September 3, 2003)

The song urges men to take up the opportunities provided by the new government to reclaim the resources that they had been deprived of under the apartheid system. It is an explicitly political song intended to advocate collective action around social, economic, and political rights, and stands in contrast to the mouth-bow and *ingadla* songs, whose expressions of noncooperation were shrouded in musical and contextual ambiguity. Where the performance of this song is a response to political possibility, and imagined as running *toward* the state, women's walking songs recount a moment in history where life in the borderlands was experienced in a perpetual state of strategic avoidance of the state.

Conclusions

This chapter has explored the creative mechanisms by which two seemingly frivolous musical genres were redistributed by women in western Maputaland during the height of the apartheid era to accommodate a “shared critique of domination.” These songs provide valuable insight into the everyday responses by women to the strictures of the state, and are particularly relevant in a context where the “in-betweenness” of borderland identities and the physical and political remoteness from the centers of power have rendered their experiences little understood. Like *toyi-toyi*, these songs were propelled by driving rhythms that sustained movement and found their expressive potency in performances that drew on the collective. Unlike *toyi-toyi*, however, their embeddedness in everyday expressive activities meant that they were not profiled as “showpieces and slogans” as were the protest songs used by the organized political opposition, and have thus remained largely overlooked as valued oral evidence in the construction

¹⁶ The derivation of the song is not certain, although it is claimed as a collective composition by the community.

¹⁷ *Izibongo* praises are an ancient genre of isiZulu oral poetry that are generally associated with a chiefly clan or with royalty. They are a powerful, metaphorical, and highly refined rhetorical practice. Their delivery is rapid, and often defiant and authoritative.

